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FOR UNDERSECRETARY TOBIAS

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [OVIP](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [CG](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR VISIT OF AMBASSADOR RANDALL TOBIAS  
TO THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is slowly feeling its way toward solutions to fundamental governance and development challenges following historic 2006 national elections. The Department's decision to identify the DRC as a priority assistance country reflected the achievements to date, the promise of the peace and democratization processes, and the importance of the DRC as the linchpin of Central Africa and beyond. Your visit, following recent travel to the DRC by the French and British cooperation ministers, the Belgian foreign minister, the UN deputy secretary general, and the associate director of the UN Development Program, will underscore U.S. commitment to the goals of governing justly and democratically, peace and security, economic growth, humanitarian assistance, and investing in people. End summary.

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The challenges  
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¶2. (SBU) Your May 6-8 visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo comes at a key point following a difficult transition from dictatorship, mismanagement and devastating wars. This situation calls for continued and sustained U.S. commitment to maintain stability and promote economic development. There are important successes on which to build, but major challenges remain, and the performance record since elections thus far has been mixed.

¶3. (SBU) Historic presidential and parliamentary elections in 2006, the first free vote in some 40 years, produced a government which is only slowly seeking its way toward solutions to fundamental governance, development, and security challenges. Although mitigated by the presence of MONUC, the UN's largest peacekeeping operation, security remains a major problem. Human rights violations are common, and impunity is widespread. The country, as large as all of western Europe, is rich in natural resources, but needs to develop the infrastructure, skills, and accountable institutions to ensure those resources benefit the population. Poverty remains endemic, and health, education and other social services are nearly non-existent.

¶4. (SBU) Corruption, deeply entrenched during decades of misgovernment, remains a problem in all sectors. A serious budget shortfall exacerbates the challenges for a newly-installed democratic government to meet popular expectations of change heightened by the success of the 2006 elections. Lastly, renewed violence in March and related political events have broadly raised questions as to whether the DRC's leaders are committed to democracy, or the country risks sliding backwards. (Note: President Kabila and close aides have expressed considerable resentment of criticism

coming from the international community in the wake of March violence, complicating the DRC's foreign relations and needed partnership with donors. End note.)

¶5. (SBU) The Department's 2006 decision to identify the DRC as one of seven priority assistance countries in Africa reflected the importance of achievements already made, and of the democratization process underway to promote regional stability and development. The Mission's overriding policy goals focus on implanting a culture of democracy and accountable governance, while promoting broad economic development in a stable Congo at peace with its neighbors and itself. Our assistance program fully supports and reflects the Secretary's transformational diplomacy goals. The FY 2006 budget for DRC programs totaled \$68m, including funds received from central accounts but excluding IFDA. Comparable figures for 2007 have fallen to \$46m, but are set to rise in 2008 to \$80.2m. We appreciate the strategic and transformational nature of the projected budget figures, which will provide resources appropriate to the DRC's needs.

¶6. (SBU) Your visit, following recent travel by the French and British cooperation ministers, the Belgian foreign minister, the UN deputy secretary general, and the deputy chief of the UN development program, will highlight ongoing Mission efforts to develop and sustain partnerships that support USG goals in five key program areas: Governing Justly and Democratically, Peace and Security, Economic Growth, Humanitarian Assistance, and Investing in People.

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Governing Justly and Democratically  
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¶7. (SBU) The July and October 2006 national and provincial elections signaled the end of the Transition Government created in 2003 to put an end to years of strife during what came to be called Africa's World War. Joseph Kabila was inaugurated as president in December. Antoine Gizenga, a former associate of independence figure Patrice Lumumba, became prime minister, and the National Assembly approved his five-year program and 59-member ministerial council in February 2007. The constitution promulgated in February 2006 provided for election of eleven provincial governments, which are in the early stages of organization.

¶8. (SBU) The new institutions have been marked so far by indecision and an apparent lack of urgency. The challenges they face in establishing accountable democratic institutions are immense. Authoritarianism and corruption have been endemic for decades. "Good governance" is a slogan at best, citizens are inexperienced at holding their representatives accountable, the judicial system is dysfunctional, and there are significant abuses of human rights.

¶9. (SBU) USG programs for FY2007 aim to support good governance and institutional reform. They focus on combating corruption and human rights abuses, developing independent judicial and legislative institutions, and facilitating decentralized state authority. Their objectives incorporate longer-term reforms as well as direct citizen access to services.

¶10. (SBU) We continue to work with National Assembly deputies on drafting key legislative proposals, including laws relating to the political opposition, financing of political parties, decentralization, establishment of a national elections commission and protection of human rights. We have also conducted capacity-building seminars for deputies and staff members, supported creation of provincial watchdog and advocacy groups to encourage citizen participation in democratic processes, and worked to develop skills of political party members, foster grassroots anti-corruption initiatives and establish mobile courts and legal aid clinics. Our GDJ budget for FY2008 is \$20m, a nearly 100 per cent increase from \$10.2m in FY2007.

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Peace and Security  
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¶11. (SBU) The security situation remains precarious in many areas, particularly in the eastern provinces. The Congolese military suffers from weak command and control, corruption, poor operational planning and administrative and logistical capacity, limited training, questionable loyalty on the part of some of its troops, and a troubling record of human rights violations. Troops are poorly paid, when they receive salaries at all. Border and customs controls are inadequate, and the capacity of the Congolese police urgently needs to be strengthened.

¶12. (SBU) Donor-funded security sector reform (SSR) and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs have achieved mixed success at best, and low-level conflict remains in many eastern areas. The government has abandoned established military integration protocols in the province of North Kivu in favor of an alternative process of "mixing" dissident and government troops into combined units that largely sustain their ethnic "identity" and that have added to fears of insecurity in the region.

¶13. (SBU) PS programs currently focus on reintegration of ex-combatants, conflict management, officer training, and destruction of obsolete ordinance. Our reintegration efforts in North Kivu and northern Katanga are jointly funded with the World Bank; a third program, targeting ex-militia fighters in the Ituri District of Orientale Province, is a multi-donor initiative. We are implementing four conflict management programs, in Orientale, South Kivu and Maniema provinces. Our media support program (which you will visit in South Kivu) is a country-wide effort with an emphasis on the eastern areas of the country. A training program for brigade-level officers is ongoing in Kinshasa; upon completion, officers will be deployed to integrated brigades around the country. IMET funds U.S.-based courses that include English-language training. NADR currently funds destruction of obsolete ordinance in Equateur and Katanga.

¶14. (SBU) Although USG involvement in security sector reform has received relatively limited funding, we anticipate additional activities in the near future. Thanks to \$5m in

funding provided in the 2006 Iraq Supplemental, we are rehabilitating the officer training academy, providing officer training, and making significant investment in the military justice system. For FY2008, \$8.4m already allocated from FMS, INCLE, NADR and PKO funds will enable greater involvement in SSR activities including, for the first time, police training.

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Economic Growth  
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¶15. (SBU) The Congolese people have not benefited from the natural resource wealth of the country because of protracted war, civil disturbances, mismanagement and corruption. However, the promise of post-election stability has generated renewed multilateral and bilateral commitments. The government is moving toward implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approved in mid-2006 by the World Bank and IMF executive boards. Its five-year program is based on the PRSP and includes a Good Governance plan covering the remainder of 2007. It focuses on addressing five "chantiers" (literally "construction sites") identified by President Kabila: infrastructure, employment, education, water/electricity and health.

¶16. (SBU) Anticipated, major shortfalls in the yet-to-be-drafted 2007 budget and reduced external budgetary support will make it difficult for the government to achieve its objectives. However, the World Bank has just approved \$180m in emergency funds, approximately half of which will be used for urban infrastructure in Kinshasa, with the remainder

allocated to Ministry of Education programs and for domestic debt payments. The Bank also recently announced a nearly \$300m rehabilitation package for parastatal hydroelectric plants at Inga. Further discussions will take place at the DRC Consultative Group meeting currently planned for June.

¶17. (SBU) The IMF suspended its regular stabilization program in March 2006, leading to the loss of some \$40m per month of Central Bank reserve support and of nearly \$200m in outside budget support. GDP growth for 2006 was less than six percent, with GDP per capita close to \$100: at current rates, it will take until 2060 for per capita income to reach pre-independence levels. Excessive public spending in 2006 contributed to a budget deficit of over \$50m, an already burdensome national debt and inflation of over 20 per cent. The government expects to present a draft budget to Parliament by mid-May, with the hope of having it approved before mid-June. Estimates from the Ministry of Plan are that the budget will be around \$2.4bn, with more than half needing to come from outside funding sources.

¶18. (SBU) USG programs in support of economic growth are currently relatively modest, and focus on agriculture. Programs include \$1.4m to raise and distribute virus-resistant cassava, a regional effort to combat cassava virus and banana wilt, and \$1.2m to revive palm oil, coffee, rubber and cacao production and commerce by small-scale farmers. We have also developed a social marketing campaign to prepare for and combat the effects of avian flu. We are working with mining firms in a Global Development Alliance to improve livelihoods of families of their employees, former informal-sector miners, and surrounding villages. Funding for economic growth will increase to \$10m annually in FY2008, and we plan to launch an expanded cassava virus program and support women's small enterprise development and access to credit for cassava production.

¶19. (SBU) The Mission also manages the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), a conservation initiative to slow loss of biodiversity and tropical rain forest in the nine countries of the Congo River basin. In the DRC, CARPE works in seven priority "landscapes," including the Kahuzi-Biega National Park in South Kivu and the Virunga National Park in North Kivu, which have the highest rate of biodiversity in the region. The U.S. has contributed \$50m to CARPE to date, with other donors collectively funding an equal amount.

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Humanitarian Assistance  
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¶20. (SBU) Four million people have died as a consequence of 10 years of war and conflict. Low-level combat continues to cause large-scale population displacements, particularly in eastern areas of the country. Many social and economic

support structures have collapsed as a result of neglect, corruption and lack of resources, leaving victims without livelihoods, access to medical services and in many cases, places to live.

¶21. (SBU) Disaster relief and food assistance funds represent approximately one-half of all U.S. foreign assistance to the DRC. Total non-food IDFA funding in FY2006 was \$26m. OFDA provides transportation and a start-up cash package to returning IDPs, and is mounting labor-intensive road rehabilitation programs. We also fund emergency health programs and water and sanitation supply in conflict areas, particularly in South Kivu, and distribution of seeds and tools in Ituri District and northern Katanga. The USG provided \$36m of food assistance in 2006, most channeled through the World Food Program for distribution in conflict areas. If current trends continue, most emergency health activities will be transferred to developmentally-based health programs at the end of 2007.

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## Investing in People

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¶22. (SBU) Social indicators are dismal: the DRC ranked 167th out of the 177 countries in the 2006 UNDP Human Development Report. Seventy-five per cent of the population lives on less than one dollar a day. Infant mortality is 212 per thousand. Less than 25 per cent of girls graduate from primary schools.

¶23. (SBU) USG programs focus on primary health care, primary education and protection of vulnerable groups. Health is our largest development effort. USAID has made a four-year, \$12m commitment for HIV/AIDS prevention and care, CDC funds surveillance and pediatric HIV/AIDS programs, DOD has programs for military prevention and care, and State has an innovative public diplomacy program to increase HIV/AIDS awareness. We plan to program over \$55m for primary pediatric health care in 82 rural health zones over the next three years, and continue to support national tuberculosis and polio eradication efforts.

¶24. (SBU) We are currently implementing programs to facilitate access to and upgrade primary education, with a particular focus on girls. The Ambassador's Girls Scholarship Program provides 18,000 girls with primary school scholarships. USAID grantees provide teacher training in Equateur, Bas Congo, Bandundu and South Kivu provinces. The USG also works with other donors including UNICEF and the World Bank to responsibly reduce or eliminate Congolese school fees, and plans to distribute 50 tons of materials and supplies to primary schools and pupils this year. The Mission also funds a holistic program in eastern provinces to respond to the needs of rape victims. We are currently funding NGOs working to prevent and deal with child abandonment in Kinshasa and Eastern Kasai province.

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### Leverage and donor coordination

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¶25. (SBU) USAID currently co-funds a number of non-traditional partnerships which are bringing outside resources to bear on pressing development challenges. These include investment in commodity processing and marketing with agricultural marketing firms, corporate social responsibility with mining multinationals, and HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

The USG is also an active participant in the Country Assistance Framework (CAF) process to align major donors' DRC assistance strategies during 2007-10 and support government efforts to implement the PSRP.

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### A message of partnership

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¶26. (SBU) We welcome your visit, which comes at an opportune time to encourage the government to build on its democratic gains, and urgently address the expectations of the Congolese people. We ask that you help us to reinforce the following messages:

-- The United States supports establishing in the DRC a culture of democracy, which will best ensure the country's development.

-- Democracy is the open competition of ideas and policies, and therefore the rights of the political opposition must be guaranteed. For its part, the opposition must act responsibly and remain loyal to democratic principles and elected institutions.

-- The government should take immediate and tangible action to provide basic services to the people, provide economic stability, end corruption, and thereby encourage investment and growth. An elected government is accountable to the voters. This is what good governance is all about.

The international community will help.

-- It is imperative that the army and police act professionally, provide domestic security and respect human rights. Their abuses must stop in order to maintain the goodwill of the international community.

We are confident that adding your voice to these messages will help the leaders of the DRC make their country a valued partner.

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